The Leadstacker

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Why Would I Do This To You?

I have often wondered what it is about blackletter styles of type that facinates me so. While I do have some German ancestry, I'm sure that preference for a lettering style can't be transferred genetically. My wife has suggested that my first historic printing studies influenced me heavily. Perhaps she's right. When I go back to those textbooks I first studied, I find examples of Gutenberg's, Fust and Schoeffer's, and Caxton's work. I also find illustrations of manuscript pages that were usually done in blackletter.

Could my love for this style of type stem from my fondness for ornamentation? Could it be that I like blackletter because it stands out so prom-

inently? Could it be that I just want my printing to be seen? You may not be able to read it but you sure do notice it. Could my pleasure in blackletter just be a fondness for a "black" page of type? As I study and learn more and more about typography, I find myself drawn toward heavier type faces. Not that black pages of type are considered attractive by other typographers, it's just become a personal preference of mine. A gray page set in something like Centaur or Elzevir does not excite me. I find the work of William Morris attractive. I also find that I've been experimenting with little or no leading between the lines of type which makes for a blacker page. Perhaps we'll never know what draws me toward the use of blackletter. Perhaps it's just my penchant for trying to be different, my nonconformist nature.

Whatever the reason for my love

of blackletter types I have long wanted to do a serious bit of typesetting in blackletter. Since I don't read nor speak the German language, using this type appropriately is impossible. So you, my few readers in the amateur journalism and hobby printing world, along with a couple of long suffering friends and relatives, are blessed with the opportunity to partake of my typographical predispositions. At this point I'm sure that I've lost many readers because of the difficulty in reading this type. No matter; I'm doing this for myself and maybe a couple of other printers who admire any type regardless of its readability. If you have stuck with me so far I would guess that by now you're probably starting to find it's not quite so hard to read. Hopefully by the time you reach the end of this journal you'll find yourself maybe even enjoying reading blackletter.

How long has it been since an amateur journal has been printed in blackletter and will this be the last time one is hand set in blackletter?

Some History

On examining some 19th century type founders' specimen books, I found many styles of blackletter available from each foundry. Thomas MacKeller states in 1874 that the United States was second only to Germany in the production of German printing. There were large populations of Germans in this country at that time who tended to live in ethnic communities and maintain their language and culture. Even some of the earliest type foundries in the United States carried German or blackletter type in their inventories. Six sizes of blackletter can be found in Binney and Ronaldson's specimen of 1812.

The German text types of the early 19th century tended to be very black but toward the end of that century style

and tastes evolved to prefer a much lighter and delicate blackletter. Even open or outline styles were popular for display purposes. Apparently as the German population began to meld with all the other cultures in America and English became the common language, the Germans quit using their native language and the use of blackletter declined.

Blackletter seems to have become fashionable for formal social printing at the end of the 19th century. Exactly why this style of type became a formal face is a mystery to me. By the beginning of the 20th century most type foundries carried only one or two styles of blackletter for text matter and only a few for display purposes. By World War One most foundries did not show any blackletter for text use, in their specimens. Could this have been some reaction against anything German? About

this time blackletter seems to have become commonly known as "Old English."

These days a few blackletter styles can be found on the computer systems but these are usually badly designed or grossly misused.

As computers take over the last bits of type composition, as proper typography is taught less and less, and our choices of type faces are narrowed to only Futura and Times, I surmise that blackletter will fade into complete disuse and become something akin to hieroglphics, to be read only by specially trained people.

What follows is a sampling of most of the blackletter type faces that can be found in the cases of Shooting Star Press.

Chaucer Text

American Type Fonnders No. 66

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOP
QRSTUVWXYZ&
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890$!!.-;:,'

One of my personal favorite blackletter faces, Chaucer Text was first shown in 1904. Condensed and quiet black, the face is somewhat difficult to read in any size smaller than 24 point, but really exudes an ancient manuscript flavor.

Bradley

Monotype No. 75
Typefounders of Phoenix

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST
UVWXYZ&1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
?!',;:.-

Bradley Extended

American Type Founders

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRS
-:;, TUVWXYZÆŒ& .?!'
1234567890£$
abcdefghijklmnopqrs
tuvwxyzrgœæ

If usage in advestisements in the *Inland Printer* were any indication, Bradley would surely be one the most popular types ever produced. In addition to the two versions shown above, there was also an italic and outline version. With German accents the face was called Ihlenberg.

Engravers Old English

American Type Founders No. 148

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
&H 1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrstu
vwxyz y z ct ſh ff fl ffi ffl
.,-;:'?!

This face is, in my opinion, one of the most useful and readable of ATF's blackletters. Slightly condensed, it sets well in text applications but is also attractive when used as a display and jobbing face.

Engravers Text

American Type Founders No. 451

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUV
WXYZ& 1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz!?',;:.-

Another face intended for social stationery, it is difficult to print unless conditions are ideal.

Parisian Black

Chicago Type Foundry

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNO
PQRSTUVWXYZ&
1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrstu
vwxyz ff fi fl ß -!.?::,
ſ tz ſſ ſi ſt ck ch ä ö ü

An attractive blackletter from the mid 1800's. Note the long "s" forms. Since the font has German accents and ligatures, the name of the face is rather puzzling.

Fabritius

Harold Berliner's Typefoundry

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUV
WXYZ&1234567890$.,;;-'!?†()C–
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz fi ff fl ffi ffl

An unusual face about which I can find no information. Berliner seems to be the only foundry to possess the matrices for the face. It could be an English Monotype face.

Cloister Black

American Type Founders No. 98

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ&
1234567890$VTW
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ß?!',;:.-

A beautifully rich blackletter with a long pedigree. This face looks great in small amounts unless there's a lot of capitals in the copy then it becomes a little busy.

Schwabacher Text

Monotype No. 101
Sterling Type Foundry

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWX
YZ& 1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrstu
vwxyz äöüllzckchfiflſſiſt

Sylvan Text

Barnhart Bros. & Spindler

ABCDEFGHIJ
KLMNOPQRS
TUVWXYZ& ⁘⁘
1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyzfiffl
’.=⁘,,!?

Sylvan is a very attractive and most readable face and I regret having only a small font. With German accents and ligatures, BB&S called the face Schwabacher No. 5 as it is indeed of the Schwabacher style.

Tell Text

ABCDEfGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ&
1234567890$£.-;:,'!?
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuv
wxyzfiffflffiffloæ

An adapation of William Morris' Troy font and was sometimes called Morris Romanized Black. This font was the Smithsonian Revival cast by Out Of Sorts Letter foundry. I find this face very pleasing when used as a text face.

Augustan Text

Dickenson Type Founders

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ&
1234567890$£?,-!;:
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzæ

Another interesting face that might look good used in text matter but unfortunately I only have a small font.

Wedding Text

American Type Founders No. 141

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ&H
1234567890$.,-;:!'?
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
nd rd st th o'c

This was probably the most popular typeface for formal social uses in the twentieth century. Cast from six to 48 point by ATF, I've found it in almost every shop that I've bought out. While it looks pleasing on an invitation with every line centered and generously leaded I find it weak and unsuitable for justified text matter.

Satanick

Boston Type Foundry

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOP
QRSTUVWXYZ&
1234567890$£?!',;:-.
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvw
xyz

Another adaptation of William Morris' Troy type.

Waldorf Text

Barnhart Bros. & Spindler

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ&1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
.-:;,'!?

An unusual and seldom used face introduced in 1914. Good printing conditions and hard paper are required to make this face print well, the fine engraved lines being difficult to keep open. Personally, I wouldn't attempt to use this face in less than 24 point even though it was cast as small as 14 point.

Modern Text

MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ&,-:;'!?
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzæœffiflfifffifl

A slightly ornate face that is also slightly condensed, it might be useful for text composition but my font is woefully small and doesn't even have the alternate and more ornate lower case chacracters normally supplied with the font.

Carbon Text

Barnhart Bros. & Spindler

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOP
QRSTUVWXYZ&
1234567890$.!?',:;-
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuv
wxyz

A handsome looking face that would probably work for text if one had a large font. The foundry had a German version they called Wide Germania No. 5.

Ecclesiastic

Typefounders of Phoenix

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQR
STUVWXYZ& 1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
.-;:,'!?

This face has a long history and was sold under several different names. In England in the late 1860's it was known as Victoria or Universal. In this country it was sold as Ornamented No. 540 when sold by the Bruce foundry or Tudoresque or Victoria from other foundries, according to Mac McGrew.

Tudor Bold

Barnhart Bros. & Spindler

ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUVW
XYZ& 1234567890$
abcdefghijklmnopqrst
uvwxyz.=;:,'!?

Tudor No. 5

Barnhart Bros. & Spindler

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ&
1234567890$.,'=;:!?
abcdefghijklmnopqrs
tuvwxyzﬁﬂﬀﬃﬄæœ

These faces, along with a version called Tudor Text, seem to be simply a renaming of existing German fonts. Tudor Text (not shown) was a weight between the two faces shown and with German characters and ligatures was called Schiller No. 5. With the German characters, Tudor Bold was called Bismark and Tudor No. 5, Gothe No 5.

48 pt. German Title from B B & S

60 pt. German Condensed B B & S

72 pt. Goudy Text Monotype

German Type

Unidentified 7 line wood type

Fraktur!

15 line wood type from Hamilton Manufacturing

This twenty-seventh issue of the Leadstacker was done up into print by John Horn at his Shooting Star Press. The text type is Heintzemann (Monotype no. 100) cast by Phillip Driscoll at his Irish Hills Typefoundry in Michigan. Over thirteen thousand impressions on hand-fed presses were required to produce this issue. Seven hundred copies done for friends, relatives and members of the APA and the AAPA.

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